

02370

1969/01/02

SECRET/NODIS

January 2, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

From: Henry A. Kissinger

Subject: North Vietnamese Reply to Your Message

On December 31, Hanoi replied to your message of December 20 (a copy is at Tab B) through Mai Van Bo (DRV representative to the Government of France). A translation of his reply is at Tab A.

Significance:

- The tone of the Hanoi message is more conciliatory by far than is customary;
- There is the usual effort to drive a wedge between Saigon and Washington;
- Hanoi, which always drafts very carefully, emphasizes that its point of primary concern is US willingness to withdraw troops (no reference to a ceasefire, de-escalation, etc.).

Recommendation: That we keep the ball in play by sending back the following:

- "We have noted with interest Mai Van Bo's communication.
- "In reply to his question, the Nixon Administration is willing to negotiate seriously and in good faith.
- "The Nixon Administration solemnly affirms its readiness to withdraw US forces from South Vietnam as part of an honorable settlement.
- "It is our belief that progress depends on concrete proposals to achieve an honorable peace.

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By h311 NAPA Date 3/17/81

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-- "We reaffirm our readiness to examine Hanoi's ideas
carefully, with goodwill and in strictest confidence."

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

Other _____

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By h311 NAPA Date 3/19/01

112 HVB

vous avez à plusieurs reprises déclaré clairement que vous venez
à Paris avec une attitude sérieuse et pleine de bonne volonté. Si les E.U.
désirent réellement régler le problème et qu'ils recherchent une solution
honorable comme ils l'ont souvent dit ils doivent aussi avoir une
attitude sérieuse et de la bonne volonté.

Pour parvenir à une solution pacifique du problème vietnamien, notre
position est très claire. C'est la position en 4 points du Gvt de la R.D.V.N.
qui a été rappelée le 2/11/1968. Nous approuvons également les 5 points de la
solution politique du problème sud-vietnamien avancée par le Front National du
Sud V.N. le 3/11/1968.

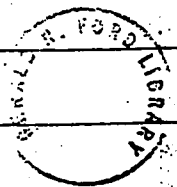
à l'heure actuelle, si la Conférence à quatre de Paris n'a pas encore commencé,
c'est précisément parce que l'administration de Saïgon retarde le problème
de la procédure pour retarder son ouverture, et que les représentants
des E.U. approuvent les exigences absurdes de l'administration de Saïgon.
Ce n'est qu'après l'ouverture de la conférence qu'on pourra discuter de
questions de fond en vue d'une solution pacifique du problème.
Toutefois, au cas où les E.U. voudraient vous communiquer leurs idées
générales et leurs idées concrètes pour préciser les points déjà connus, nous
les examinerons sérieusement.

113 HVB -- Tout d'abord je pense que la question est de savoir si les E.U. veulent
réellement ou non la paix, s'ils veulent réellement ou non retirer leurs
troupes du Sud V.N., ou s'ils ne parlent de tout cela que pour ne rien faire.
D'autre part, de toute évidence, l'administration actuelle de Saïgon ne



vent pas les pays. Elle veut au contraire que les E.U. restent au Sud Vi
pour qu'elle puisse continuer à vivre de la guerre - Or les E.U. s'accroche
toujours à cette administration, ce qui nous fait douter sérieusement de
leur attitude. A vrai dire, tant que la clique Thieu-Ky-Huong
reste à la tête de cette administration, il sera difficile de régler quelque
problème que ce soit.

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UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

December 31, 1968

1. We have on several occasions clearly declared that we came to Paris with a serious attitude and full of goodwill. If the US sincerely desires to resolve the problem and reach an honorable solution, as it has often said, it also must have a serious attitude and goodwill.
2. In order to arrive at a peaceful solution to the problem of Vietnam our position is very clear. It is founded on the Four Points of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which were reaffirmed on November 2, 1968. We also approve the Five Points for a political solution of the problem of South Vietnam put forward by the National Liberation Front on November 3, 1968.*
3. At the present time, if the conference of the four in Paris has not yet begun, it is because the Saigon Administration uses procedural issues to delay its opening, and because the representatives of the US support the absurd demands of the Saigon Administration. It is only after the opening of the conference that one will be able to discuss the deeper questions relating to a peaceful solution to the problem. However, if the US wishes, it may communicate its general ideas, and its specific ideas for making more precise points that are already known, for our serious examination.

Mai Van Bo commentary: At the beginning, I believe that the question is to know if the US wants peace, if it really wishes to withdraw its troops from South Vietnam, or if it only talks of this to make it possible to do nothing. For the rest, evidence indicates that the Saigon Administration does not want peace. Instead it wishes that the US remain in Vietnam so that it can continue to make a living from the war. As the US already leans on that Administration, we seriously doubt its attitude. To be quite honest, as long as the Thieu-Ky-Huang clique remains at the head of that Administration, it will be difficult to settle any of these problems.

* A discussion of the Four and Five Points is at Tab C

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